

Richard Greene, Regional Administrator hosted a visit by Charlie Johnson, EPA's Chief Financial Officer, Tad Gallion, Congressional staff for the House Appropriations Committee, and Jerry Clifford, Deputy Assistant Administrator for International Affairs at EPA to the Paso del Norte area. Through the assistance of Fernando Macias, General Manager, and Javier Cabrera, Deputy Manager of the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), they toured several points of interest in the El Paso, New Mexico and Ciudad Juarez area. The purpose of the tour was to get an overview of the issues and problems related to the border, especially the water and wastewater infrastructure needs. They were also accompanied by William Luthans, Deputy Director, Multimedia Division and Gilbert Tellez, Water Division, EPA, Region 6.

The tour started early in the morning with an overview of the environmental problems of the Paso del Norte region. The tour participants met at top of the Franklin Mountains to look at the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez from a birds eye view. Next the group drove to Vado, Dona Ana County, New Mexico to visit the South Central Wastewater Collection and Treatment Facility which, when completed, will serve the Vado/Del Cerro, La Mesa,/San Miguel, Berino and Chamberino communities in New Mexico. The group then crossed the newest entry-crossing into Mexico, the Santa Teresa port of entry, into Ciudad Juarez, visiting the largest used tire pile center in the entire border. The group saw approximately 4 million tires (and growing), which in some cases are over 10 years old. The group heard a presentation by representatives of Ciudad Juarez on the current plans to clean up the pile.

Mayor Greene and guests then headed to the Riberas del Bravo to hear a presentation on the growth of the south east part of the city, and the lack of waste water services for this growing population. Next, they met with the local water department, and visited the North Water Treatment Plant. This plant, together with the South plant, are serving over 1.5 million Ciudad Juarez residents. This project addressed environmental and health problems caused by inadequate sewage services and lack of wastewater treatment in the city. The group also visited the Anapra colonia in Ciudad Juarez. Anapra is an enlargement of Ciudad Juarez, and is considered a socially and economical marginal area. A water distribution system covers 90 percent of Anapra. However, several families are still supplied with water truck for their drinking water. There is no wastewater services available in Anapra. The group heard a presentation on a proposed plant. Finally, the group crossed back into the U.S. through the Santa Fe port of entry.

Mayor Greene and Mr. Johnson both commented on the air pollution and dust that is caused by the number of unpaved roads in Ciudad Juarez. They were also concerned about the amount of border residents, both in the U.S. and Mexico, that live poor conditions, especially in the Anapra area. Both agreed that current and past efforts have been excellent; however, more needed to be done to resolve the health and environmental issues along the border.